

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 ERDA-05 OES-03 NRC-05 OMB-01 AGR-05

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

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INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT MP MILI

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER'S PRESS CONFERENCE

1. UPON RETURN FROM US AND UK OCTOBER 19 PRIME MINISTER RAMGOOLAM GAVE AIRPORT PRESS CONFERENCE IN WHICH HE WAS UNUSUALLY RESPONSIVE TO GREAT VARIETY OF QUESTIONS, SOME STRAIGHT FORWARD AND SOME CRITICAL. HIS ANSWER TO MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS WERE ESSENTIALLY AS FOLLOWS:

(A) HIGHLIGHT OF HIS TRIP TO US WAS MEETING WITH PRESIDENT FORD DURING WHICH THE PRESIDENT INDICATED DIEGO GARCIA WOULD NOT BE A NUCLEAR BASE. (PRIME MINISTER'S NEWSPAPER ADVANCE HEADLINED THIS POINT AS "WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN ASSURANCES" BY PRESIDENT THAT DIEGO WOULD NOT BE A NUCLEAR BASE.)

(B) PRESIDENT FORD NOTED AND REFERRED TO HIS SUBORDINATES
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PRIME MINISTER'S QUESTION ABOUT US ASSISTANCE FOR
RESETTLEMENT OF DIEGO EVACUEES AND "I WILL BE DISCUSSING

THIS WITH THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR." WE HAVE PROPOSED A PROGRAM WHICH HAS NOT BEEN ACCEPTED (CLEARLY IMPLIED BY ILOIS THEMSELVES). WE HOPE TO ARRIVE AT A SATISFACTORY SOLUTION.

(C) "IN FACT DIEGO BELONGS TO GREAT BRITAIN AND I DO NOT THINK THERE ARE ANY CONTRADICTIONS IN MY STATEMENTS ON THE QUESTION. I MAINTAIN THAT WE HAVE RESERVED OUR RIGHTS CONCERNING FISHERIES PROSPECTING FOR RESOURCES, ETC. THIS WAS AGREED UPON."

(D) (REGARDING THE POSSIBILITY OF HOLDING IN MAURITIUS A SUMMIT CONFERENCE OF INDIAN OCEAN LITTORAL COUNTRIES ON THE INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF PEACE) AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM HAS TAKEN THIS QUESTION IN HAND. HE THINKS THAT HE WILL BE ABLE TO EXERT PRESSURE ON THE US AND SOVIET UNION FOR A REDUCTION OF THEIR MILITARY FORCES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN."

(E) (REGARDING OAU PRESIDENT AMIN'S RECOMMENDATION THAT MAURITIUS BECOME A REPUBLIC.) "THIS QUESTION INVOLVES CONSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS WHICH DEPEND ON THE PEOPLE. AS FOR THE OAU CHIEFS OF STATE AND CHIEFS OF GOVERNMENT HAVE THE SAME SOVEREIGN RIGHTS. I THINK PRESIDENT AMIN SIMPLY WANTED TO EXPRESS THE SENTIMENTS OF AFRICA ON WHAT IS THE BEST POLICY."

(F) (REGARDING AN EARLIER STATEMENT BY RAMGOOLAM THAT MAURITIAN ELECTIONS WOULD TAKE PLACE BEFORE OCTOBER 1976) "I HAVE NOTHING TO ADD TO MY DECLARATIONS."

(G) (REGARDING A RUMOR ABOUT A NEW COALITION WITH THE OPPOSITION SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY) "WE WILL WORK WITH EVERYBODY WHO WANTS TO WORK WITH US. WE ARE A SOCIALIST SOCIETY."

(H) THERE WERE NO SECRET DISCUSSIONS (IN LONDON REGARDING POTENTIAL SUCCESSOR TO RAMGOOLAM AND REORGANIZATION OF GOVERNMENT).

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(I) "I MADE SUGGESTIONS (TO UKG FOR AN INCREASE IN UK FUNDINGS FOR SETTLEMENT OF DIEGO ILOIS) BECAUSE THE SETTLEMENT PROGRAM IS GOING TO COST MUCH MORE THAN GREAT BRITAIN ALLOCATED SOME 2 1/2 YEARS AGO. WHAT WE NEED IN THIS MATTER AS IN THAT OF HMS MAURITIUS EMPLOYEES IS A CLEAR MIND, SYMPATHY AND UNDERSTANDING. WE HAVE GOOD WILL ON ALL SIDES."

(J) (REPLYING TO A QUESTION WHETHER RECENT LOCAL PRESS ALLEGATIONS THAT CIA POSES A THREAT TO RAMGOOLAM) "NEITHER

PRESIDENT FORD NOR I BROUGHT UP THE QUESTION OF THE CIA."

2. ASKED WHETHER HE RAISED THE QUESTION WITH PRESIDENT FORD OF
THE LONG-STANDING MAURITIAN DESIRE FOR A 100,000 TON SUGAR QUOTA,
RAMGOOLAM SAID THE US SUGAR ACT HAS EXPIRED BUT THERE MAY BE SOME
NEW ARRANGEMENTS. "I THINK WE WILL FIGURE MORE BROADLY IN THESE."
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